

Message Text

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ACTION SCS-03

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 SCA-01 DHA-02 L-03 PA-01
 PRS-01 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 SS-15 NSC-05 SSO-00
 NSCE-00 INRE-00 USIE-00 /049 W
 -----001516 110516Z /20
O 110150Z JUL 77
FM AMCONSUL CALCUTTA
TO AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI IMMEDIATE
INFO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6172

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E.O. 11652: NA
TAGS: CASC, PFOR
SUBJECT: INCIDENT INVOLVING AMCITS AT MAYAPUR

REF: CALCUTTA 1636

SUMMARY:

ON JULY 9 DURING THE LATE AFTERNOON AN INCIDENT INVOLVING MEMBERS OF ISKCON (HARE KRISHNA) AT MAYAPUR, NADIA DISTRICT, WEST BENGAL 115 MILES NORTH OF CALCUTTA AND INDIAN VILLAGERS OVER CATTLE AND GRAZING RIGHTS RESULTED IN 11 VILLAGERS BEING WOUNDED BY SHOTGUN PELLETS. TWO MEMBERS OF ISKCON-ONE A CANADIAN (SEPTTEL FOLLOWS) AND ONE AN INDIAN-WERE ALSO INJURED. NINE MEMBERS OF ISKCON INCLUDING THE TWO INJURED MEMBERS WERE ARRESTED AND CONFINED TO JAIL. OF THE NINE, FOUR ARE UNITED STATES CITIZENS. SEPTTELS ON EACH INDIVIDUAL UNITED STATES CITIZEN FOLLOWS.

1. THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION WAS GATHERED BY CONOFF FROM VARIOUS SOURCES DURING HIS VISIT TO KRISHNANAGER AND MAYAPUR ON JULY 10. LATE IN THE AFTERNOON OF JULY 8 CATTLE BELONGING TO ISKCON BROKE THROUGH AN ENCLOSURE TO GRAZE ON THE LAND
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OF A LOCAL MUSLIM FARMER. THE FARMER CONFISCATED THE CATTLE AND WAS BRINGING THEM TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES: HE WAS INTERCEPTED BY MEMBERS OF ISKCON WHO RECOVERED THE CATTLE AND BEAT HIM SEVERELY. LOCAL VILLAGERS, UNDER THE IMPRESSION THAT HE HAD BEEN KILLED RUSHED TO THE AREA, CAUGHT AT LEAST TWO ISKCON MEMBERS AND BEAT THEM SEVERELY. THE VILLAGERS, ESTIMATED BY VARIOUS SOURCES AT 50 TO 200, THEN PROCEEDED TO STONE ISKCON

FACILITIES. ONE ISKCON MEMBER FIRED A SHOTGUN BLAST INTO THE AIR AT WHICH VILLAGERS STATED TO RUN AWAY. ANOTHER ISKCON MEMBER FIRED A SHORGUN BLAST CONTAINING BIRDSHOT INTO THE BACKS OF THE FLEETING VILLAGERS, RESULTING IN THE ELEVEN WOUNDED.

2. DURING A VISIT TO THE LOCAL HOSPITAL, DOCTORS CONFIRMED TO

CONOFF THAT ALL WOUNDS SUSTAINED BY VILLAGERS WERE IN THE BACK. IT IS BELIEVED THAT THIS INFORMATION HAS BECOME AVAILABLE TO LOCAL PRESS.

3. CONOFF VISITED DITRICT MAGISTRATE MRS. RANU GHOSH MORN-ING OF JULY 10. OUTSET OF CONVERSATION WAS A TRIFLE STRAINED WITH HER EXPRESSING REGRET THAT THE INCIDENT HAD HAPPENED BUT THEREAFTER PROVIDED AN ACCURATE ACCOUNT OF THE INCIDENT WHICH WAS LATER CONFIRMED FROM OTHER SOURCES. SHE WAS HELPFUL IN DIRECTING CONOFF TO SUB-DIVISIONAL JUDICAIL MAG-ISTRATE N. MOITRA. DISTRICT MAGISTRATE EXPRESSED HOPE THAT THIS INCIDENT WOULD NOT HARM IMPROVING UNITED STATES-INDIA RELATIONS CONOFF ASSURED HER THAT IT WOULD NOT.

4. CONOFF THEN VISITED SUB-DIVISIONAL JURDICIAL MAGISTRATE N. MOITRA AND REQUESTED PERMISSION TO FILE A PETITION TO VISIT THE UNITED STATES CITIZEN PRISONERS ONLY. JUDICIAL MAGISTRATE AGREED TO HOLD COURT IN HIS HOME AND PETITIONS WAS HAND WRITTEN WITH HIS ASSISTANCE SO THAT CONOFF COULD SEE AND TALK TO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PRISONERS. (IT WAS THE JUDICIAL MAGISTRATE'S SUGGEST THAT WE ADD THE WORDS"AND TALKS TO" SINCE HE NOTED WRYLY THAT WITHOUT THOSE TWO WORDS THE MEETINGS WOULD BE OF NO USE). HE ALSO EXPRESSED HOPE THAT INCIDENT WOULD NOT HARM UNITED STATES-INDIA RELATIONS.

5. CONOFF MET FOUR U.S. CITIZEN PRISONERS, ASCERTAINED THAT THEY WERE BEING WELL CARED FOR, THAT THEY WERE BEING PERMITTED TO BRING FOOD FROM THEIR ASHRAM, AND SECURED PERMISSION FOR OTHER ITEMS TO BE SENT TO THEM ON MONDAY JULY 11.

6. FOR YOUR BACKGROUND INFORMATION: ACCORDING TO ISKCON MEMBER, THERE HAS BEEN GROWING FRICTION OVER THE LAST TWO YEARS BETWEEN MEMBERS OF ISKCON AND LOCAL VILLAGERS. THIS HAS RESULTED FROM ISKCON'S OBVIOUS WEALTH, ITS PURCHASE OF A SUBSTANTIAL AMOUNT OF LAND IN THE AREA, AND THE PROFITABLE EXPLOITATION OF THE LAND. IN ADDITION PROSELYTIZING BY ISKCON IN A CONVER-SATIVE RURAL AREA INHABITED BY BOTH HINDUS AND MUSLIMS HAS CAUSED FUTHER ANIMOSITY.

7. TENSION IN THE AREA IS HIGH. DISTRICT MAGISTRATE AND THE LOCAL POLICE INCLUDING WEST BENGAL DEPUTY INSPECTOR GENERAL OF POLICE GANGADHAR MUKHERIEE ARE WELL AWARE OF THIS. EVIDENCE OF

TENSION WAS SEEN WHEN CONOFF STOPPED TO REPAIR A PUNCTURED TIRE NEAR POLICE STATION IN DISTRICT TOWN OF KRISHNANAGAR, ABOUT 10 MILES FROM MAYAPUR.

A CROWD OF HINDUS AND MUSLIMS GATHERED AND WHEN MINUTES LATER TWO ISKCON MEMBERS APPROACHED THE CONOFF, THE CROWD GREW ALARMINGLY. CONOFF DIRECTED THE ISKCON MEMBERS TO LEAVE THE SCENE; THEIR DEPARTURE WAS FOLLOWED BY SHOWER OF STONES. AT THIS POINT SOMEONE HIT CONOFF WITH A STONE. THERE WAS LULL WHILE DRIVER AND CONSULAR ASSISTANT ENTERED THE CAR BUT WHEN CONOFF TURNED HIS BACK TO ENTER THE CAR HIMSELF HE WAS HIT BY A FLUTTY OF STONES. CONOFF WAS NOT HURT AND PARTY LEFT THE SCENE AT ONCE. DISTRICT MAGISTRATE WAS NOTIFIED IN WRITING RE INCIDENT COPY OF LETTER BEING POUCHED.

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8. WHEN CONOFF MENTIONED THE INCIDENT TO THE POLICE OFFICERS, AND REQUESTED THAT THEY ACCOMPANY HIM TO RECOVER HIS TIRE, THEY INSISTED THAT THEY PROCEED THEMSELVES AND PROCURE THE TIRE. IT WAS OBVIOUS FROM THE CONDUCT OF THE POLICE OFFICER THAT WHILE OFFERING CONOFF EVERY PROTECTION THEY WERE WELL AWARE OF THE SENSITIVE NATURE OF THIS INCIDENT AND DID NOT WISH TO BECOME PERSONALLY INVOLVED.

9. LEGAL SOURCES IN KRISHNANAGAR HAVE ADVISED US THAT THERE IS NOT RPT NOT COMPETENT COUNSEL TO DEFEND ADEQUATELY THE FOUR US CITIZEN. ISKCON HAS BEEN ADVISED OF THIS AND THEY ARE ATTEMPTING TO SECURE COMPETENT COUNSEL IN CALCUTTA. WE HAVE PROVIDED THEM A LIST OF ATTORNEY TO TPX THEM IN THEIR SELECTION.

10. COMMENT: VARIOUS SOURCES IN THE AREA, INCLUDING NEWSPAPER PEOPLE AT SCENE TO WHOM CONOFF PROVIDED A STATEMENT (SEPTTEL), SAID THAT IT IS LIKELY THAT POLITICIANS WILL RAISE ISSUE IN ONE WAY OR ANOTHER.
LIEBOWITZ

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Concepts: CIVIL DISORDERS
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Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
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